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ABSTRACT

This publication is a performance guide containing several brief articles for students to use before and after attending an Arts Exposure Program given by the Dance Theatre of Harlem (DTH). The first article, "Dancing," traces the origins and history of dance itself, and in particular, ballet. The second article, "Arthur Mitchell and Dance Theatre of Harlem," describes Mitchell's early education and achievement in ballet under George Balanchine at the New York City Ballet, and his work founding and building DTH. This article includes a description of DTH's dance mission as a neoclassical company. The next article, "Bones and Muscles," reviews human anatomy and dancer training. "Technique and Training" describes the training ballet dancers undergo and introduces many ballet terms. "Basic Movements" illustrates the basic steps and positions with description and diagrams. "Making Dances" discusses choreography and dance recording. The final page, "Looking and Listening," suggests ways to make the most of viewing the performance. The publication is illustrated with several photographs of DTH dancers and at several points offers suggestions for further reading or viewing (videotapes). (JB)

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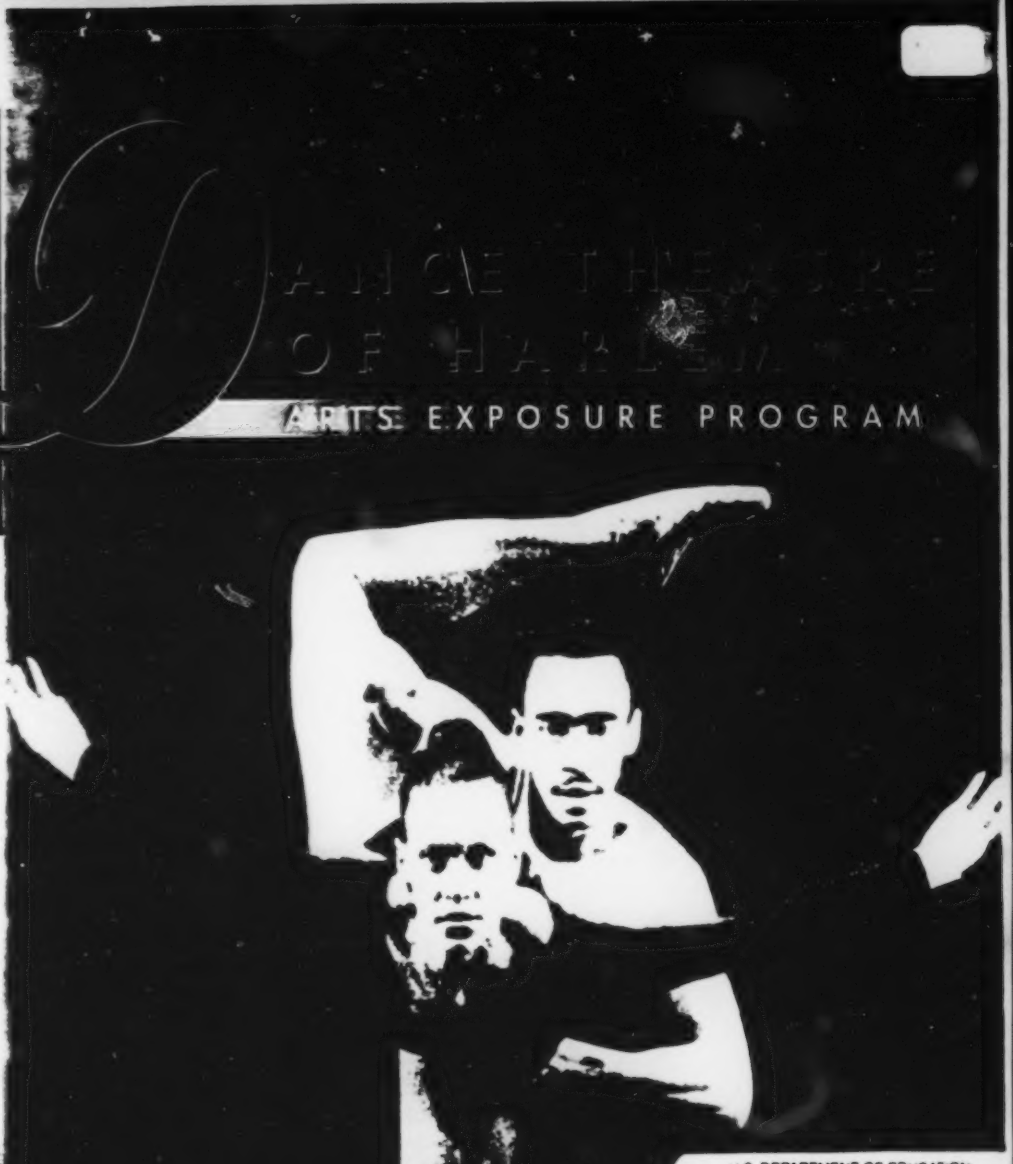
ED 383 708

CUE SHEET for Students

Dance Theatre of Harlem

Arts Exposure Program



WELCOME to *Cuesheet*, one of a series of performance guides published by the Education Department of The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, D.C. This *Cuesheet* is designed to be used before and after attending an Arts Exposure Program given by Dance Theatre of Harlem.

The Arts Exposure Program is an informal performance on the art of dance. In the program, dancers demonstrate the exercises they do every day and how those exercises are put together to form the dances they do. In addition, parts of four different ballets are performed. Throughout the program, a narrator gives information about dancers' daily training, how exercises form the basis for dance movements, and how sets, lighting, and costumes are important parts of presenting dance on stage.

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The Kennedy Center

Dancing

People have always danced.

In some societies people dance mostly for religious reasons. They want to appease the gods, to ward off evil, to pray for rain, to have a good harvest. In other societies, people dance mostly for their own amusement—by themselves or with others. In some places, dance is a performing art in which people dance to entertain others.

When people dance they move their bodies rhythmically to express ideas or emotions. Most of the time, dance has a structure. Sometimes it is improvised, or made up on the spot. But it is always rhythmical and it always occurs in space and time.

All dances are made up of sequences of steps and gestures called phrases. Phrases make up a dance the same way that words are put together to form a sentence. In tribal societies, where dances are mostly religious, people usually dance in a group in a circle. In societies where people dance mostly for their own amusement, two people usually dance together, and sometimes people dance in small groups. When people dance to entertain others, they usually do so in groups called companies. There are different kinds of dance companies, such as ballet, ethnic, modern, and jazz.

In tribal societies, forms of dance remain the same and are passed from one generation to another. In other societies, some social dances, called ethnic or folk dances, also remain the same and are passed from one generation to another. But social dances usually change over time. In the United States in the 20th century, some of the social dances that have been popular include the Charleston, the two-step, the jitterbug, the rhumba, the twist, salsa, and hip-hop.

Dances performed for audiences are almost always choreographed, or made up by one person, just as a composer makes up a piece of music. These dances may also be passed from generation to generation within companies. While dance companies perform some dances over a long period of time, new dances are still being choreographed.

Wherever it occurs and whatever form it takes, dance is one of the most powerful and interesting ways humans express themselves.

Interview your parents or grandparents about the popular dances of their youth. Ask them to teach you some steps. What kind of music did they dance to?

Photo by Martha Swope

Ballet: How It All Began

Collect pictures of ballerinas from the 17th century to today. Describe how their costumes have changed.

"Once upon a time there was a king who liked to dance."

It may sound like the beginning of a fairy tale, but it's not. The king was Louis XIV, who ruled in France from 1643-1715. The king gave great balls at which everyone danced in fancy clothes. Sometimes, dances, called ballets, were performed for the king. They were stories about Greek myths and Roman history, and other important events or people. Sometimes Louis would dance in the ballets.

The ballets became more and more complicated and difficult to perform. The king liked watching the ballets, and moved them from ballrooms into theaters so everyone could see them better. He started the first school to train professional ballet dancers.

Soon ballet dancing was popular not only with kings and queens all over Europe, but also with ordinary people. Ballerinas began to dance on the tips of their toes and to wear tutus.

During the 18th century, the Empress of Russia, Catherine the Great, invited French ballet dancers to Russia. Soon that country became the center of ballet.

Ballet became popular in the United States during the 20th century. George Balanchine, a Russian dancer and choreographer who became an American, did much to make it well known.

One of Balanchine's students was Arthur Mitchell, who became a leading dancer for Balanchine's New York City Ballet. He was the first African American to become a member of a major ballet company, and to excel in what had been considered a European art form. Later, Mitchell founded Dance Theatre of Harlem, which is the only major ballet company composed primarily of African Americans.

Three hundred years have passed since the beginning of ballet, but it continues to challenge dancers and fascinate audiences.

PROFESSIONAL DANCERS are people who have trained for many years to achieve a high level of performance skill. Their job is dancing, and they are paid for their work.

TUTU. A short fluffy skirt that allows a ballerina's legs to be seen.

BALLERINA: a female ballet dancer.

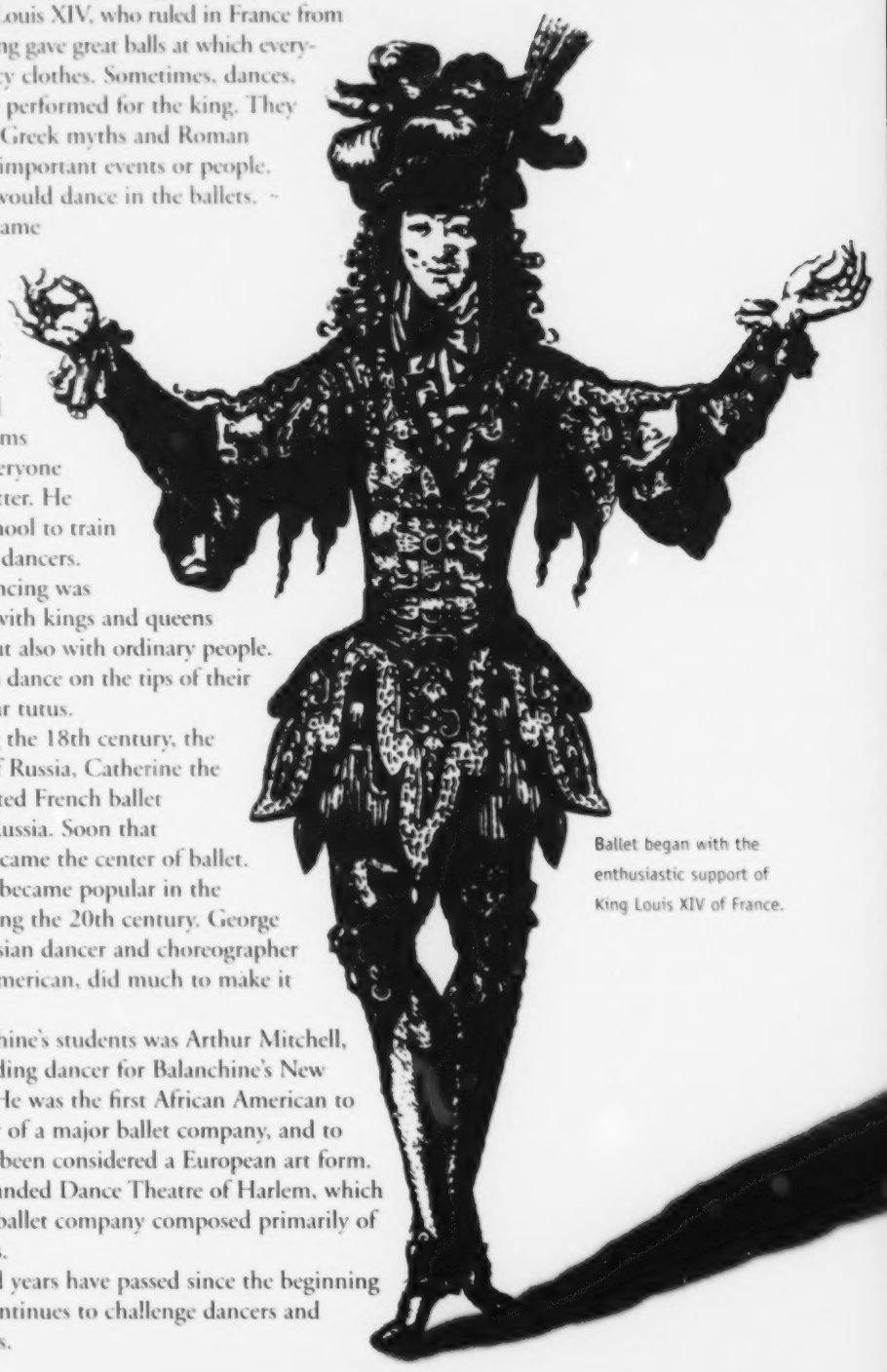
PRIMA BALLERINA: a star female ballet dancer.

DANSEUR: a male ballet dancer.

PREMIER DANSEUR: a star male ballet dancer.

YOU MAY WANT TO READ...

Ballet: An Illustrated History by Mary Clarke and Clement Crisp. New York: Viking Penguin, 1993.



Ballet began with the enthusiastic support of King Louis XIV of France.

"We have to prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that it is talent and training, not color that makes a ballet dancer."
—Arthur Mitchell

As a junior high school student in Harlem, New York, in 1948, Arthur Mitchell enjoyed social dancing. At school dances he was the one everyone noticed. Impressed by his dancing, a teacher suggested that Mitchell audition for New York's High School of the Performing Arts. Even though he had no dance training, he auditioned. The judges liked what they saw, and Mitchell was accepted at the school.

In school Mitchell studied jazz, tap, and modern dance, as well as other high school subjects. His hard work was rewarded at graduation, when he was honored with the school's highest dance award and was offered two scholarships to continue his dance study—one in modern dance, the other in ballet.

Mitchell chose the scholarship to the School of American Ballet the school where most of the dancers from the New York City Ballet company train. He decided to go there even though he knew African-American dancers were not accepted in the ballet world at that time. He hoped that by excelling in ballet, he would prove that a good dancer is a good dancer no matter what his or her skin color.

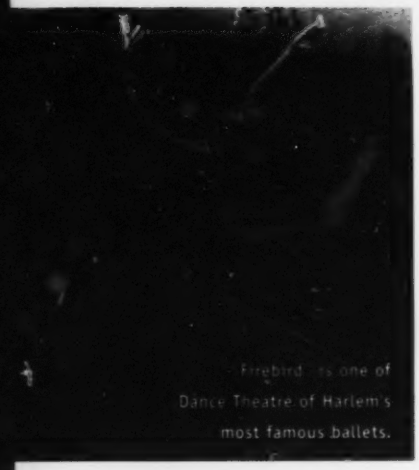
ARTHUR MITCHELL and DANCE THEATRE OF HARLEM

Three years later, at the age of 21, Arthur Mitchell was invited to join the New York City Ballet. George Balanchine, the renowned choreographer and director of the company, admired the talented young Mitchell so much that he choreographed dances especially for him. Mitchell became a star (premier danseur) in the company and was acclaimed throughout the world.

When Arthur Mitchell became a professional dancer, he experienced the feeling of being "only one of a kind". As the first African-American male dancer in a major ballet company, he encountered many of the prejudices faced by African Americans in the 1950s. Some people objected to his dancing with white females and did not want him to dance on television with a white female partner. Fortunately, Mitchell is a trailblazer, and his artistry and humanity overcame the prejudice.

After Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in 1968,

Top photo by Martha Swope. Bottom photo by Bruce Laurance.



Firebird is one of Dance Theatre of Harlem's most famous ballets.

Mitchell decided to start a ballet school in his home neighborhood, Harlem. Dr. King, who was known for his dedication to fighting prejudice through peaceful means, was an inspiration to Mitchell. Like Dr. King, Mitchell also had a dream: he wanted to fight prejudice against African Americans dancing ballet. He wanted to show the world that African Americans have the same ability to perform ballet as others.

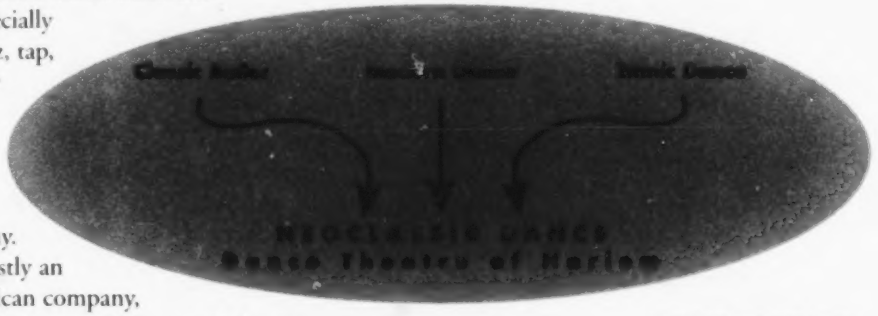
Mitchell began the School of Dance Theatre of Harlem with his former ballet teacher, Karel Shook. Working in a garage, Mitchell began teaching a handful of young people. Word of his work quickly spread throughout the community. Young and old people came in from the streets to watch the classes. Within four months, Mitchell was teaching classes to 800 young people, providing them with successful role models and professional goals.

Today the School of Dance Theatre of Harlem has an enrollment of over 1,300. Students of all races study ballet, jazz, tap, and ethnic dance. Other studies have included mime, music, chorus, percussion, costume design and construction, stagecraft, and dance administration. Many students graduate to the professional Company of Dance Theatre of Harlem.

Find a copy of the Russian fairy tale "The Firebird" and share it with classmates, friends, or family members. Ask your teacher or someone at home to help you find a recording of the music by Igor Stravinsky. Listen to it. Pick one section you like the best and make up a dance to it. Perform it for others.

DTH's Dance Mission

DTH is like no other dance company in the world. It mixes classical ballet dance traditions from Europe; ethnic dance traditions from around the world; and modern dance traditions which are especially American (jazz, tap, social). Arthur Mitchell describes DTH as a 'neoclassic' dance company.



DTH, mostly an African-American company, has a social mission as well as an artistic one. Through community outreach programs, DTH provides lectures, demonstrations, and classes. These introduce the discipline of ballet as an avenue for personal development and enrichment. DTH also works to increase audiences' understanding and appreciation of dance.

DTH tours for many weeks each year, performing throughout the United States and the world. Some of the places the company has performed are England, Australia, Japan, Russia, Argentina, Spain, Denmark, Venezuela, Brazil, Egypt, and South Africa.

In 1992 DTH visited Johannesburg, South Africa and its surrounding townships, where they performed, taught various classes, and held special workshops. The program 'Dancing Through Barriers' was a highlight in the history of the company. It was the first time that people of different ethnic backgrounds were together in the Johannesburg Civic Theatre as audience, performers, and orchestra.

YOU MAY WANT TO READ...

Black Dance in the United States from 1619 to 1970 by Lynne Fauley Emery, Palo Alto, Calif.: National Press Books, 1972; and *Black Dance in America, A History Through Its People* by James Haskins, New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1990.

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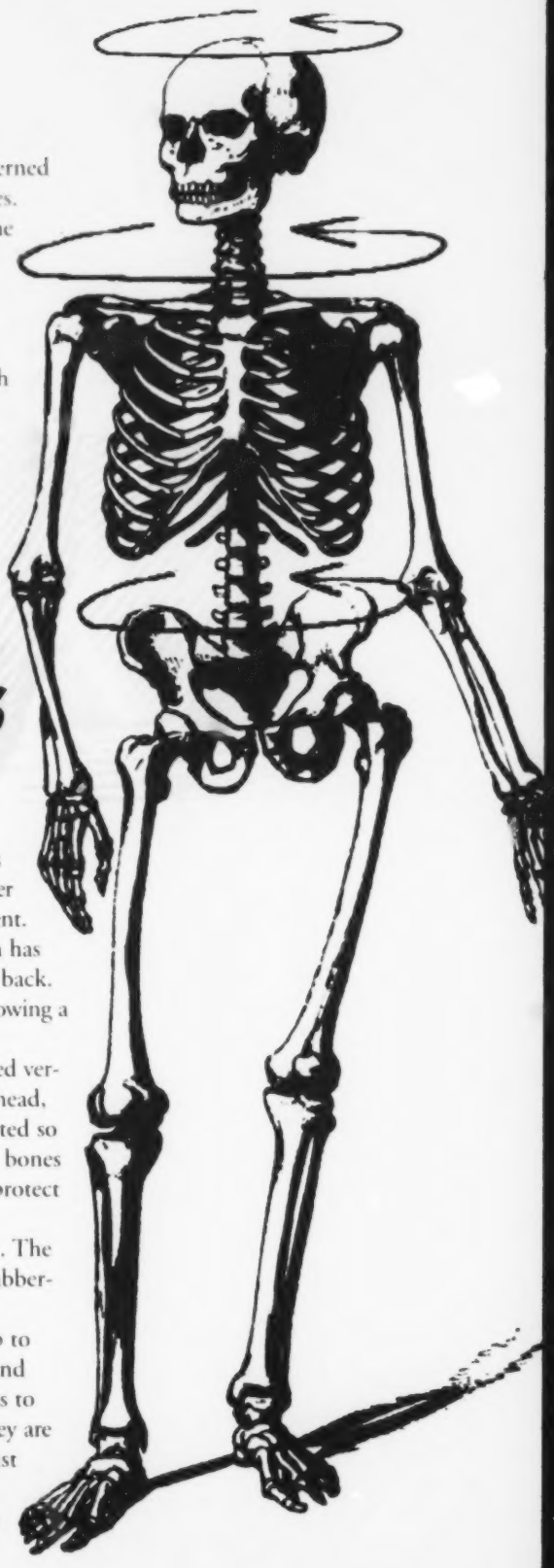
"A dancer's instrument is his/her body."
—Arthur Mitchell

In order to take proper care of their instruments—bodies, dancers must be concerned about anatomy, especially bone structure and muscles.

Bones work like a big clothes hanger. They give the body shape and keep the organs inside in place. There are three, large bony areas of the body, each shaped like a circle. When they are kept in balance with each other, the body is lined up properly.

The smallest of the bony circle is the skull, which sits at the top of the spine and protects the brain.

Bones and Muscles



The next bony circle is the shoulder area, which includes the clavicles in front and the shoulder blades (scapula) in back. The arms are attached to the shoulder area by a joint which allows great freedom of movement.

The third circle of bones is the pelvic area, which has the pelvis on the sides and the tail bone (coccyx) in back. The thigh bones (femur) connect to the hip bones, allowing a large range of movement for the legs.

Let a partner draw an outline of your body on a piece of large paper. Using different crayons, sketch in some of your bones and muscles. Label them.

The backbone is a series of 26 smaller bones, called vertebrae, which connect the three bony circles of the head, shoulder, and pelvic areas. The vertebrae are connected so that the body can bend, twist, and turn. The 24 rib bones are attached to the vertebrae. They make a cage to protect the heart and lungs.

Muscles cover the bones and help to move them. The muscles are joined to the bones by long, stretchy, rubber-band-like attachments called ligaments.

In ballet class, dancers learn exercises which help to make their muscles strong and flexible. Both male and female professional dancers often do special exercises to help develop their muscles. Muscles can be torn if they are not "warmed up" before exercise. A torn muscle must rest for four to six weeks in order to heal. That is a long time for a dancer to be out of class and unable to perform.

Male and female dancers wear leotards and tights during classes and rehearsals. DTH ballerinas dye their tights (and toe shoes) to match their skin tones.

Ballet class is conducted in a dance studio, which is a large, empty room with a special floor (often wood with a thin layer of linoleum over it). Along one wall is a long wooden rail called a barre, which the dancers sometimes hold lightly for support. Another wall is covered by mirrors so that dancers can observe their movements. Often, in one corner of the studio a pianist plays music for the class.

Ballet students enter the studio quietly. The class begins with strengthening and stretching exercises at the barre. Next, students go to the center of the studio, where they practice different steps, combinations of steps, and turns. The last part of the class is spent learning and practicing big steps that let the dancers travel through space. Throughout class, the teacher demonstrates and describes movements which students imitate. At DTH, students thank the teacher with applause.

Ideally, boys and girls begin ballet classes between 8 and 12 years of age. After they learn the basics, the boys and girls move on to advanced classes. In specialized classes the boys work on jumps, leaps, and turns. The girls prepare for pointe work, done in special shoes which allow them to stand on their toes. They also work together in adagio (partnering) class. In order to keep their bodies in proper shape, dancers continue to take classes every day throughout their careers. They never stop learning.

ADAGIO (PARTNERING)—When male and female dancers dance in pairs, they frequently perform difficult lifts and turns which require exact timing and balance. In order to do them with apparent ease, students take classes that help them learn to be good partners.

PULL-UP helps the dancer look as if he or she is standing as tall as possible. Pull-up conveys a feeling of 'lift' throughout the body. "The ears are over the shoulders, shoulders over the hips, and hips over the balls of the feet." —Martha Graham

SPOTTING—To avoid dizziness when doing turns, dancers focus on one spot as they turn. Many theaters have a small blue or red light in the balcony on which dancers focus.

TURN-OUT is the rotation of the leg from the hip-socket. Dancers use turn-out because it allows greater movement of the leg, enhances the beauty of body line, and provides greater strength of movement.

YOU MAY WANT TO READ...

First Steps in Ballet by Brian Shaw, London: Octopus Books Limited, 1980.

A Day in the Life of a Ballet Dancer by John H. Martin, Mahwah, N.J.: Troll Associates, 1985.

Technique AND TRAINING

"The most important lesson for a dancer to learn is that his/her instrument will only perform equal to the effort they put into developing it."—Arthur Mitchell

Photo by Joan Marcus

All dance steps begin and end with one of the five basic positions. The five basic positions of the feet in ballet were developed in the 1700s and remain basically the same as when they were first introduced. They are the positions in which all steps begin and end. The five positions are also used in other kinds of dance.

Below are some exercises that ballet dancers practice every day. You will see Dance Theatre of Harlem dancers demonstrate them in the Arts Exposure Program.

The movements in these exercises are all used in ballet dances. They have French names because the movements were invented in France in the Court of Louis XIV, where the rules for ballet were developed. Watch for them in the dances performed during the Arts Exposure Program and other ballet performances.

Study the five basic positions, illustrated here. By yourself or with others, stand in each of the five positions. How easy or how hard are they to do?

Exercises and Basic Movements

Plié [plee-AY] "to bend." Pliés are good warming-up exercise because they stretch all the muscles of the heels and legs. There are two types of pliés: demi-pliés and grand pliés.

Demi-plié [duh-MEE plee-AY] "half bend." The knees are bent as far as they will go without letting the heels come off the floor.

Grand-plié [grahn plee-AY] "large bend." The knees are bent, keeping the heels on the floor, until it is necessary to lift them off the floor.

Demi-plié

Grand-plié

Tendu [tahn-DEW] "to stretch." This exercise stretches and strengthens the arch underneath the foot. The leg is turned out, the foot is pointed to the front, side, and back, and side again. After each movement the foot returns to original position. The toe always touches the floor.

Tendu

Rond de Jambe [rawn duh-JHAHM] "to circle the leg." This exercise loosens up hip ligaments and improves turnout. The leg and foot are brushed forward, then circled around to the back and closed to the original position.

Rond de Jambe

Illustrations courtesy of *An Usborne Guide: Ballet & Dance*, EDC Publishing, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

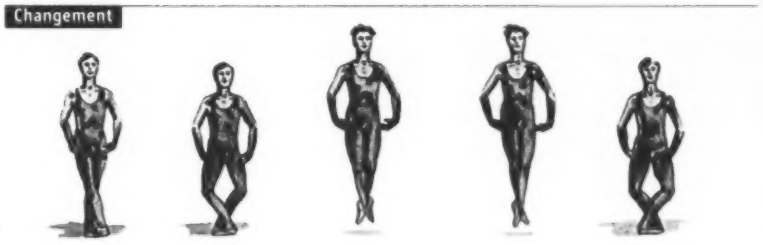
Frappe [fra-PAY] "to strike." The ball of the foot strikes the floor with quick movements. This exercise is good for responding quickly. It is also good preparation for jumping steps.

Battement [bat-MAHN] "beating." The kicking action of the leg. There are two types of battements: grand battements (large kicks) and petits battements (small kicks). The kick can be done to the front, side or back. The exercise strengthens the legs and increases the dancer's ability to stretch.

Basic movements

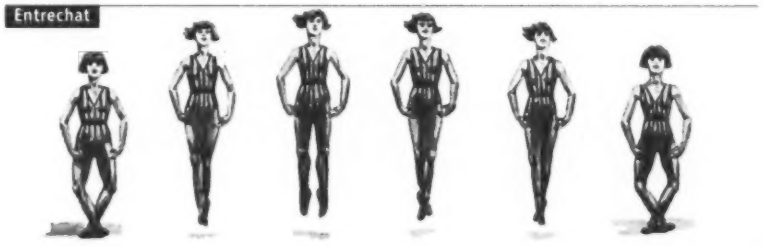
Jumps and Traveling Steps

Changement [shahnj-MAHN] "change." A changement is a jump in which the position of the feet is changed before landing.



Jeté [jhuh-TAY] "to throw." A jump from one foot to another. The leg is thrown forward, backward or sideways.

Entrechat [ahn-truh-SHAH] "interweaving or braiding." A step in which the dancer jumps straight up in the air and changes the position of the feet a number of times before landing.



Bourrée [bour-REH] "to glide." A series of small steps performed by a dancer on pointe which gives the impression of gliding over the stage.

Pas de Chat [pa-duh-SHAH] "cat step." A jumping step which looks like a cat pouncing on a mouse. The dancer travels through the air in a light, springing movement, often doing several in a row.

TOE SHOE. In the 1800s, female dancers called ballerinas began dancing on the tips of their toes. In this way they appear to be weightless, gently hovering above the ground. By the end of the 1800s every female dancer had to learn to dance on her toes, called 'en pointe.' Modern pointe shoes are made with support under the sole of the shoe, called the shank, and have layers of hardened glue in the tip of the shoe, called the box, to protect the toes. Pointe shoes usually come in pink satin, but Dance Theatre of Harlem ballerinas have specially colored toe shoes to match their skin tones.

Making DANCES

Choreography is the art of inventing dances. Choreographers are the people who do the inventing.

Choreographers imagine how dancers can move, alone and with others. Then they work with dancers to make what they have imagined become real. They organize phrases into dances.

Usually choreographers are dancers as well. Choreographers must know about many things besides dancing. They must be able to select music and be able to work with the people who design costumes, sets, and lights. The choreographer is responsible for everything seen in a dance performance.

Ballets are choreographed and rehearsed in a studio, and are performed on a stage. Ballet is an art form that results from the collaboration of a choreographer with many other people: dancers, musicians, set and lighting designers, and stage crew members. The final collaborators are the members of the audience. Only when the audience is present does the dance come to life.

Arthur Mitchell and other American choreographers explore themes and movements special to the American experience. Some American choreographers you may wish to find out about are Alvin Ailey, Debbie Allen, Katherine Dunham, Martha Graham, Gregory Hines, Pearl Primus, and Tommy Tune.

Imagine 3-5 movements you have seen your friends doing. Organize the movements into a phrase. Choose music that goes well with the movement phrase. Record your movement ideas on paper and teach them to another person. Perform your choreography together.

Photos by Martha Swope

Recording Dance

Some artists have been able to leave a permanent record of their work. In the visual arts, the sculpture or painting is left for the next generation. Composers leave the musical score as a record of their compositions. People in theater have a script from which a work can be partially recalled. However, for a long time dance had no permanent method of record-keeping or notation. Dances were memorized. They were told and shown from one generation of dancers to the next.

Since the 1960s, video has become an important method for documenting dance. Not only does video record the dance steps like other notation systems, it also records the dancer's interpretation of the dance. Video is used sometimes to document daily rehearsals when a dance is being created, and to record performances. Dance Theatre of Harlem uses video to record its work.

YOU MAY WANT TO SEE...

Creole Giselle (88 minutes, video). Performance by DTH.

Dance Theatre of Harlem (120 minutes, video). This video includes performances of Fall River Legend, John Henry, The Beloved, and Troy Game.

"Firebird, Arthur Mitchell, and Dance Theatre of Harlem," An arts instructional resource unit from *Artsource: The Music Center Study Guide to the Performing Arts*. Includes booklet, video clip of Arthur Mitchell, and eight slides from the ballet *Firebird*. For information call (213) 972-7485.

Ronald Perry and Lorraine Graves in *Firebird*.

You as a Dance Theatre of Harlem Student

The Kennedy Center and Dance Theatre of Harlem (DTH) are engaged in a multi-year residency program that introduces dance to Washington, D.C., area students and teachers. Lecture-demonstrations, workshops, training experiences and live performances are offered to students and teachers in Maryland, the District of Columbia, and Virginia.

Students are selected to participate in a sixteen week series of classes at the Kennedy Center. Approximately 100 students participate in eight weeks of dance classes with DTH teachers. From this group, a smaller number of students is selected for advanced study for eight more weeks. After that, selected students are provided scholarships for further summer study locally (or at the Kennedy Center) during the summer, or at the School of DTH in New York City. If you would like to find out more about participating in the program, write to: Kennedy Center/DTH Community Residency, Education Department, The Kennedy Center, Washington, D.C. 20566-0004.

Eddie J. Shellman, Gregory Jackson and Tyrone Brooks in *John Henry*.

Looking and Listening

Attending Dance Theatre of Harlem's Arts Exposure Program will be interesting and enjoyable for everyone if you

remember to...

- listen in order to understand the information the narrator provides
- pay careful attention to the movement the dancers demonstrate and perform in exercises and dances
- look for the great physical and mental discipline demonstrated by the dancers

watch for how...

- dancers move in time with the music
- movements from the exercises are included in the dances
- dancers balance alone and with a partner
- the dancers perform in solos, trios, quartets, and corps de ballet (a large group)
- scenery, costumes and lighting contribute to the overall effect of the dances
- movements from social dances are part of DTH dances
- dancers often end a movement phrase symmetrically

listen for...

what the narrator says about how:

- dancers are trained to dance
- dancers stay in shape
- dancers are athletes
- ballet is similar to dances you do
- how the music is related to the dances

The dancers will be in the same room

as the audience, and will be affected by the audience's behavior. Dancers must concentrate and move precisely. Unexpected activity or noise distracts them. The dancers rely on you to help them make a successful performance. Enjoy yourself. Sometimes you'll be surprised. Sometimes you'll laugh. Sometimes you'll applaud.

Remember: listen carefully and watch closely.

BALANCE refers to a dancer's ability to be stable. Dancers work on their technique to have perfect balance in a variety of positions.

TIMING refers to the dancer's ability to move in rhythm with the accompanying music and with other dancers.

SYMMETRY is used to describe the position of a dancer's body. A dancer's body is symmetrical when the arms and/or legs are in the same position on each side of the body.

The Kennedy Center

James D. Wolfensohn, Chairman
Lawrence J. Wilker, President
Derek E. Gordon, Associate Managing Director, Education

Dance Theatre of Harlem Arts Exposure Program
Arthur Mitchell, Artistic Director

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Photo by Maya Wallach